

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Today the President signed the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act into law as part of the conference report on Defense Authorization for Fiscal Year 2010. The legislation closes gaps in federal law to help combat hate crimes committed because of a person's gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability. Following the signing ceremony, Representative Xavier Becerra (CA-31), Vice Chair of the House Democratic Caucus, released the following statement:

“Every American deserves the freedom to be who they are without fearing for their safety. Yet, all too often gay, lesbian and transgender Americans are threatened and attacked for simply being themselves. The Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act now gives state and local law enforcement the tools they need to prevent and prosecute hate crimes nationwide, strengthening protections against violence motivated by hate and further securing the right for all Americans to feel safe in their own community.”

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